way of expressing and editing what he learned from his informants and he is not interested in
pretending that his perceptions and personality play a minor part or no part at all in the process.
His contribution to the debate is to abandon the sceptics’ attitude that, despite the problems of
attaining an emic perspective, it is still a goal to be pursued. Instead he investigates the unique
relationship forged between himself, as an individual (and an ego to use a more emotive
term), and his teacher, as another. (We might add here, on a lighter note, that Bakan is indirect-
ly giving the whole movement of “World Music” cross-cultural fusions, received by many
ethnomusicologists with dismay, at least a mod of approval.) He is well aware of the impli-
cations of his method. “There are those in the ethnomusicological community who would claim
that what I learned was ‘wrong’ and that how I understand beleganjur music must therefore
be wrong as well” (p. 294). We might wish that he had told us this at the beginning of
the book rather than near the end! Of course he is right, but then the same could equally be said of
scholars who persist with their quest for the Holy Grail of emic perception.

The book is an important addition to the ethnomusicological canon, as challenging as it is
informative and as vibrant as the music it discusses. Its appeal to gamelan devotees will be ob-
vious, but it also stakes a claim to advance the theory of ethnomusicology in its broadest sense.
Not only does this maximise its appeal and relevance but it is also the case that the book’s
greatest value is as an investigation not so much of what Bakan found out about beleganjur as
of how he negotiated his unique relationship to Balinese culture and to the individuals with
whom he worked. It turns out that those encounters with overwhelming waves, mad dogs and
beautiful women were not just colourful side-shows designed to whet the reader’s appetite.

Neil Sorrell

References

McPhee, Colin
1966 Music in Bali: A Study in Form and Instrumental Organization in Balinese Orchestral

Tenzer, Michael
2000 Gamelan Gong Kebay: The Art of Twentieth-Century Balinese Music. Chicago: Uni-
versity of Chicago Press.

Manuel, Peter. East Indian Music in the West Indies. Tán-singing, Chutney and
2000. xxii + 252 pp., music exx., notes, index, illustrations, bibliography, dis-

This book provides an in-depth survey of Indian-Caribbean tân-singing in Trinidad, Guyana
and Surinam, and is accompanied by a useful CD recording. Although the sub-title indicates
tân-singing and chutney, only one out of seven chapters focuses on the popular genre, chutney.
Manuel clearly places greater value on tân-singing perhaps because it is a tradition in decline,
but also because this music is “closer” to an Indian musical legacy. Tân-singing provides an
excellent place from which to explore the theme of preservation and change in diasporic con-
texts, and Manuel’s strength in pursuing such an analysis lies in his engagement and familiarity with north Indian musical practices. Tān singing, otherwise known as “local classical” music, has been transmitted by semi-professional musicians since the indenture period (1838-1917). Manuel explores the development of this local-classical music and notes the problematic of reconstructing the history of tān-singing in the Caribbean, especially during the early indenture period. He provides a rich analysis of the stylistic features and of the subgenres that make up tān-singing.

The study follows on the heels of Myers’s portrait of “Indian” music in a Trinidadian village (Myers 1998). That ethnomusicologists seem to have recently “discovered” Indian-Caribbean as a diasporic musical community feels rather like waiting for a bus. You wait for ages and then two or three turn up at once. Indeed, researchers interested in Indian-Caribbean musics have relied heavily on historical, social and political studies, as well as insights provided by the region’s finest novelists, to gain an understanding of these musical practices. Local scholars, too, have provided much material for contemplation. In this study, Manuel, for example, has drawn extensively on the historical and analytic material of Narasimio Ramaya (a Trinidadian musician and scholar). Yet, his debt to Ramaya is perhaps best recognised in the dedication page. The extent to which his own analysis and aesthetic judgements have been shaped by, or accord with, Ramaya will only be evident to readers familiar with Ramaya’s writings.

In many ways, this book is a useful complement to Myers’s study. While Myers’s perception of diaspora is shaped by fieldwork in the Caribbean followed by research in India trying to trace the “origins” of what she found in Trinidad, Manuel’s experience and his resulting analysis begins in India. Thus he writes about the creative transformations to be found in Indian-Caribbean musics, essentially employing, nevertheless, the model of Indians as “preservers” of culture. Chapter two begins with a quotation from the Trinidadian musician, Mungal Puterson, “you take a capsule from India, leave it here for a hundred years, and this is what you get” (p. 15). This view encapsulates one of Manuel’s main interests in studying a “diasporic” music. For him, Indian-Caribbean music—especially tān-singing—offers a window into India’s musical past. This is in fact one of the most intriguing aspects of this study. Manuel’s comparison of performance practice in the Caribbean and in India is fascinating. He is shown old Indian songbooks which “reveal the existence of an alternative 19th-century north Indian performance tradition, which, however, never made its way into musicological literature or modern canonical practice” (p. 82).

While Manuel’s references to North Indian musics are illuminating, our stories that in expecting to find musical practices and conceptions reproduced in the diaspora, Manuel was sometimes at odds with Caribbean musicians. He writes, for example: “in conversations with performers, my attempts to elicit verbal descriptions of this process [the displacement of cadential patterns], or even acknowledgement of its existence, generally resulted in mutual exasperation due to the musicians’ inability to articulate or recognize concepts of meter” (p. 131). The performers under observation have to insist on the differences in their approaches to these traditions, reminding the reader, as well as Manuel, that musical practices in the diaspora can be radically transformed even when they appear to be the same. Manuel continues: “Habituated as I was to thinking of North Indian meters as inviolable entities, I was reminded of Humpty-Dumpty telling Alice that his words mean whatever he chooses, because he is the master of them. Similarly, in tān-singing, a vocalist can be the master of the meter, not a slave to it.... Such a conception is quite different from that prevailing in India” (p. 131).
One feature of this book is that there are a number of inaccuracies or misrepresentations that in themselves do not add up to much but taken as a whole are irritating. At the outset of the book, Manuel writes about Indian indentureship to Trinidad, Guyana and Surinam beginning in 1845 (p. xiv). This was the date of the arrival of the first indentured Indians in Trinidad, but in Guyana, the process began earlier, in 1838. He also writes about contributing to a field of studies on “a people otherwise ‘without history’” (p. xv). This is confusing with regard to the politics and inter-ethnic dynamics of this area. Indian-Caribbeans have never been seen as “without history” in contrast to, for example, African-Caribbeans. Manuel’s claim that the achievements of writers like V. S. Naipaul and David Dabydeen have little connection to the traditional culture that preceded them (p. 13) are baffling at best. Aware of the intense debates that surround the origins of the percussion instrument, the dhundal, he writes: “the dhundal is widely asserted to be an Indo-Caribbean invention, although my research has revealed it to be an archaic Bhupuri-region instrument that, for whatever reasons, became ubiquitous in the Caribbean” (p. 110). Manuel simply does not provide enough information on his new discovery to carry this point, given that Caribbean historians and musicians have searched unsuccessfully for evidence of this instrument in India. While he seems to have found the dhundal in India, he was surprised to learn that he did not find roti (a bread consumed in both Indian and Caribbean contexts) there. The problems in making a throwaway observation on the dhundal, are compounded by proceeding to draw a misinformed parallel between tân-singing and roti. Following his reference to dhundal, chapter four concludes:

... tân-singing has become to Hindustani music what Indo-Caribbean cuisine is to mainstream North Indian (Punjabi Moghuli) cooking. Each, in this regard is “roti”, a sort of curry sandwich wrapped in a light flour pancake…. Although its name is Indian…, it has no particular counterpart in India and is clearly an Indo-Caribbean invention. Like tân-singing, roti is manifestly related to North Indian cuisine, and although it may be less sophisticated in general, it has its own distinctive flavor and validity (p. 110).

The point that musical traditions change in diasporic contexts is unproblematic here. Manuel’s implication that tân-singing as a diasporic practice is “less sophisticated” is not. Without such a value judgement I may have happily overlooked his mistakes on roti (simply bread and found in India too). But the book is littered with this kind of aesthetic judgement, particularly in the discussion on chutney. This popular genre is described as having “light and insignificant song texts” (p. 176), and the artistic quality as being “generally amorphous” (p. 180).

Manuel’s consistent depiction of Indians as subject to exclusion, repression and holding outsider status in the Caribbean is also too rigid. He quotes the former Trinidadian Prime Minister, Eric Williams to support his understanding of the regard in which Indians are held in Caribbean society, but fails to read Williams deeply enough. He thus misses, for example, the significance that Williams placed on the role played by Indian-Caribbeans as landowners in moving towards a postcolonial Trinidad and Tobago (Williams 1964). Indeed, despite discussion on ethnicity and gender issues, the book reveals some naivety about local politics. Tân-singing and chutney in secondary diaspora sites is only mentioned in relation to the United States, Canada and the Netherlands. That Manuel doesn’t mention the “motherland” of Britain is puzzling given that Europe has been critiqued as providing a geographic referent for India (Chakrabarty 1996) as well as for Caribbeans.

Despite reservations of the kind discussed above, this book is a detailed study of Indian-Caribbean musics. It covers a wide geographic terrain—Trinidad, Guyana and Surinam as
well as noting musical practice in some secondary diasporas. It is the most comprehensive study of dance/migration that I have come across and is a welcome addition to the literature on Indian-Caribbean musics. Diaspora is contestable terrain. While I do not agree wholeheartedly with Manuel’s analysis and representation of this particular diaspora, he has written a thought-provoking book. His final observations provide poetic illumination on musics in diaspora: “fusions like chutney-soca and Indo-Guyanese dub seem epitomes of cultural disorder, they can also be seen as logical strategies of self-positioning in an era of multiple identities and global flows of people and images” (p. 206). The recent emergence of ethnomusicological literature on Indian-Caribbean musics enables us to compare diverse views on this particular diaspora. Eventually, the availability of multivocal analyses will contribute to enriching our appreciation of Indian-Caribbean musics.

Tina K. Rammarine

References

Chakrabarty, Dipesh

Myers, Helen

Williams, Eric
1984 History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago. London: Andre Deutsch. [1962]


In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Portugal led a cycle of maritime navigation that took its language, religion and music to the four corners of the world. In some cases, as with the Portuguese presence in Japan and in most of Asia, this cycle shut in on itself; in others, the same presence persisted far beyond the sixteenth century, though in a rather interspersed and isolated manner – this is what happened in Goa, India and Macau, China. Finally, in some African countries and especially in Brazil, the phase of Portuguese navigation represented the beginning of a cultural enterprise with far greater consequences.

This book, organised by Salwa El-Shawan Castelo-Branco, offers the most important and complete perspectives to the present date of the place of music in this vast universe. At the same time, it also offers a valuable contribution to the study of intercultural processes in music in general. Published at an accessible price in both Portuguese and English, it deserves to be widely purchased and read. The book is structured in four parts, preceded by an “Introduction: Five Centuries of Cross-Cultural Processes in Music” by the editor. The first part, the shortest,